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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

22 October 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Soviet Reaction to Certain US Moves

1. The President's statement may leave the Soviets in some doubt as to whether the US will in fact take direct military action against the missile bases. They will probably believe that they have some time and opportunity to influence the next US move. Their aim will be to forestall US military action.

2. We do believe that they will promise to withdraw the missiles. The USSR will certainly denounce the US quarantine and the US surveillance as violations of international law and acts of imperialistic aggression against the interests of a small country. It will probably issue dire threats, alert its own forces, increase the sense of world crisis, and try to mobilize support in the UN for some UN action which will inhibit further moves by the US. We suggest the possibility that Khrushchev will come at once to New York, calculating in this way to tie US hands for the time being.

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3. For the first few days at least, the chances are that the Soviets will delay testing the quarantine while the political situation develops. Likewise, we think the Soviets for a time will probably not shoot down a US reconnaissance plane.

4. Beyond this, Soviet actions will depend greatly upon their reading of US intentions. If they judged that the US was determined to eliminate the missile bases by force if necessary, they would probably proceed with caution and leave open a line of retreat. If they see indications of ambiguity in the US position they may further engage themselves in commitments to Cuba. Thereafter they would find it difficult to avoid some form of sharp retaliation perhaps military, to a US air strike.

*(Abbott Smith)*  
ABBOTT SMITH  
Acting Chairman

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